

E-mail - Best Practice Guidelines



- Firstly ask yourself 2 questions:-
Do I really need to send an e-mail?
Is this the most appropriate method of communication?

If the answer to both is 'yes' then the following guidelines will help you to get the most out of this wonderful form of communication:-

- Always include a **subject heading** - some people may even delete messages without subject headings for fear of viruses.
- **KISS** - keep it short and simple. Be concise and to the point. Long e-mails can deter people from dealing with them efficiently and cause frustration.



- Construct your e-mail **as you would talk** and **don't overuse punctuation** e.g. !!!!!!! ??????? and only use abbreviations that are already common and generally understood.
- Keep e-mails '**easy on the eye**' e.g. short paragraphs, bullet points, key items easily identified. Remember, most e-mail is in plain text format.
- **Do not use CAPITAL LETTERS** - this is often interpreted as the equivalent of shouting.
- Always use the **spelling and grammar checks**. If your system has the feature use the automatic check facility.
- Make it clear who the message is from, using a **signature** is a good way of doing this but keep it short and clear.
- **Mind your manners** - remember to say please and thank you and be polite.
- Only use the **urgent** flag when it is really necessary.
- Avoid sending e-mails to large numbers of people unless you really have to.



- Remember, e-mail **addresses are personal** and individuals may not take kindly to them being copied, or forwarded to people they have no control over. Use the 'bcc' feature and remove addresses from forwarded e-mails unless you really need to show the distribution.



- Requesting **delivery and read receipts** as a matter of course can annoy people. Only use this feature as an 'emergency' back-up.
- Do not assume your e-mail will be read immediately or in time for an event - if it is **urgent or short notice** you should probably supplement it with a telephone call or personal visit.
- When replying to a message retain only as much of the original message as is appropriate.

- Always **read your message over**, put yourself in the recipient's shoes and try to understand how they will interpret it. Make any adjustments, re-read and then press send.

- Do not send a message in the **heat of the moment**, or if you are unsure, tired, or frustrated. Type it - save it to draft and review it later.



- Do not forward **chain letters** or virus hoaxes.

- There is no such thing as a private e-mail! If you are mailing on a **confidential or sensitive** matter it may be appropriate to use encryption or another form of communication.

- Add a **disclaimer** to your e-mail.

- Many companies have **specific policies**/guidance on the use of e-mail - check out yours and then make sure you follow it!

- **Be patient** with inexperienced users and give them the benefit of the doubt. If you are unsure about the sentiment behind a message check it out.

- E-mail is subject to the **laws of the land** relating to written communication including the laws relating to defamation, copyright, obscenity, fraudulent misrepresentation, freedom of information and wrongful discrimination.

